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An Academic Resolution on the Linguistic and Scriptural Evidences regarding Al-Istiwa

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May Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى guide us all;
May Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى forgive us for our shortcomings.

"In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful."

Preface

This booklet is written to address a certain argument regarding the Istiwa, that Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى is on his سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى throne above the heavens.

Among the people who reject this fact, stated by the Qur'an, are the Jahmiyyah, Mu'talizah, Ash'ariah, Maturidah, and Rafidah.

The inspiration for writing this booklet is to defend the original creed that Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى revealed upon the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, followed by the Salaf رضي الله عنهم. Many of our brothers and sisters unfortunately freeze when they hear objections regarding Istiwa, and are unable to answer adequately. إن شاء الله this will no longer be the case.

The goal of this booklet is to guide these deviant people by the grace of Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى, the Almighty.

The booklet explores the argument of Istiwa, tracing the history and looking deeply into what the Qur'an has guided us to.

The booklet is certainly not perfect and thus may have mistakes. It is my sincere request that instead of weaponizing these mistakes, whoever finds a mistake informs me so that we all may be guided, إن شاء الله.

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Sources: www.quran.com , www.sunnah.com , www.wikipedia.org

اَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

May Allah guide us all on the right path, and may he destroy those who rebel and reject guidance, and may Allah ﷻ not let us be one of those rebels who are the misguided ones.

There is no doubt amongst the Muslims that the Qur'an is surely the word of Allah ﷻ, though there may be small differences of opinion on how to interpret it.

﴿ إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا ٱلذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُۥ لَحَٰفِظُونَ ۝ ﴾

Indeed, it is We who sent down the message [i.e., the Qur'ān], and indeed, We will be its guardian. (Surah Al-Hijr 15:9)

However, these differences of interpretation only arise in complex non-literal situations, not where Allah ﷻ has clearly stated his ﷻ message of guidance. For instance:

﴿وَٱلْأَرْضَ وَضَعَهَا لِلْأَنَامِ ۝ فِيهَا فَٰكِهَةٌ وَٱلنَّخْلُ ذَاتُ ٱلْأَكْمَامِ ۝

وَٱلْحَبُّ ذُو ٱلْعَصْفِ وَٱلرَّيْحَانُ ۝ فَبِأَىِّ ءَالَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ۝﴾

And the earth He laid [out] for the creatures. Therein is fruit and palm trees having sheaths [of dates] And grain having husks and scented plants. So which of the favors of your Lord would you deny? (Surah Ar-Rahman 55:10-13)

Here, there is no interpretation for the verses except that Allah ﷻ has created the Earth for us. And He ﷻ has given us means of sustenance through various fruits, trees, crops, and plants.

None of the Muslims say that these verses talk about something else or that the verses are metaphorical. Likewise, the statement that Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى, the High, the Exalted, is over His سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى throne must be interpreted literally, not metaphorically, as do the Jahmiyyah, Mu'tazila and the Rafidah, may Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى guide them.

﴿ٱلرَّحْمَـٰنُ عَلَى ٱلْعَرْشِ ٱسْتَوَىٰ ۝٥﴾

The Most Merciful [who is] above the Throne established. (Surah Taha 20:5)

During the time of the Salaf رضي الله عنهم , particularly the Sahaba رضي الله عنهم, all were in unanimous agreement that Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى is over his سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى throne above the heavens. This is proven as there is not a single report that the Sahaba and Tabi'un رضي الله عنهم ever had a difference of opinion on this matter.

The deviant opinion originally came from Al-Ja'd ibn Dirham (executed 124 AH), may Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى deal with him. He was the person who believed in the negation of several of Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى's attributes. He believed that Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى can't be defined and He سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى is an abstract identity. Astaghfirullah! Moreover, he also believed that the Qur'an isn't the eternal word of Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى; instead, it is a creation (makhluq), and Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى didn't speak directly to Musa عليه السلام, and he سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى didn't take Ibrahim عليه السلام as a close friend.

After his execution by Khalid al-Qasri of Iraq on Eid al-Adha, his student Jahm bin Safwan (executed 128 AH), may Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى deal with him, shaped his radical ideas into the Jahmiyyah sect to poison the hearts of the Muslims. The Mu'tazilites would adopt this theology and later also make it one of the fundamental creeds of the Rafidah, may Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى guide them.

The origin and the history of this disgusting idea tell that this idea of negating what Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى has directly said in the Qur'an is nothing but blasphemy.

Before this question is answered, the deviant people, particularly the Ash'ari and the Maturidi people, may object to asking the question "Where is Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى?" These people say that Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى isn't present at any location. To better understand their blasphemy, let's say their statement, but through the converse reality it implies: Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى exists nowhere. Astaghfirullah! May Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى deal with them. To clear the doubts of whether this question is bid'ah or not, one might judge themselves from this hadith:

> *I said: Messenger of Allah, I have a slave girl whom I slapped. This grieved the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). I said to him: Should I not emancipate her? He said: Bring her to me. He said: Then I brought her. He asked: Where is Allah? She replied: In the heaven. He said: Who am I? She replied: You are the Messenger of Allah. He said: Emancipate her; she is a believer.*

(Reported by Mu'awiyah b. al-Hakam al-Sulami رضي الله عنه, Sunan Abi Dawud 3282)

For any sound believer, they must believe what the Qur'an says about Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى being over his throne, and not dismiss it, and certainly not create their own interpretations out of it. In the Qur'an, there are exactly seven verses explicitly stating that Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى rose over his throne. These verses are 7:54, 10:3, 13:2, 20:5, 25:59, 32:4, and 57:4.

﴿طه ۞ مَآ أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ ٱلْقُرْءَانَ لِتَشْقَىٰٓ ۞ إِلَّا تَذْكِرَةً لِّمَن يَخْشَىٰ ۞ تَنزِيلًا

مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ ٱلْأَرْضَ وَٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ ٱلْعُلَى ۞ ٱلرَّحْمَٰنُ عَلَى ٱلْعَرْشِ ٱسْتَوَىٰ ۞ لَهُۥ مَا

فِى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَمَا فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ ٱلثَّرَىٰ ۝ وَإِن تَجْهَرْ بِٱلْقَوْلِ
فَإِنَّهُۥ يَعْلَمُ ٱلسِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى ۝ ٱللَّهُ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ لَهُ ٱلْأَسْمَآءُ ٱلْحُسْنَىٰ ۝ ﴿

Ṭâ-Hâ. We have not revealed the Quran to you ˹O Prophet˺ to cause you distress, but as a reminder to those in awe ˹of Allah˺. ˹It is˺ a revelation from the One Who created the earth and the high heavens—the Most Compassionate, ˹Who is˺ established on the Throne. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth and whatever is in between and whatever is underground. Whether you speak openly ˹or not˺, He certainly knows what is secret and what is even more hidden. Allah—there is no god ˹worthy of worship˺ except Him. He has the Most Beautiful Names. (Surah Taha 20:1-8)

In the introductory verses of Surah Taha, Allah ﷻ talks about his ﷻ greatness. How He ﷻ is the Most High, the Most Exalted, the Most Compassionate, and everything obeys his majesty ﷻ.

The Surah starts with Allah ﷻ consoling the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ that the Qur'an is for the believers, to act as a guide, not as a burden or means of distress. It is the revelation of the Almighty Allah ﷻ. He ﷻ created the heavens and the earth, and is the most compassionate and the most powerful. He ﷻ commands from above the heavens over his ﷻ throne. Everything in this universe, even the governing laws, is His ﷻ creation and in His ﷻ control. He ﷻ is all-knowing, all-seeing, and all-hearing. He ﷻ is the one with the knowledge of the unseen (ghayb). Thus, no one has the right to be worshipped except him ﷻ. He ﷻ has the most ultimate of the attributes.

It can be clearly observed that the gist of the staring verse is completely literal. There is no opinion on the meaning of these verses except what is in the verses. These verses are among the simplest of the verses, and one may be blessed with their guidance (if they're sincere) without needing external interpretations. The deviant groups like to believe that

the verse “the Most Compassionate, ˹Who is˺ established on the Throne” talks figuratively about Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى being on a throne. Rather, they believe that the throne refers to the dominion of Allah سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى, which in itself is not wrong, as long as they don’t reject the primary literal meaning of the verse. Inspecting the verse of Surah Hadid:

﴿ سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِى ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ ۖ وَهُوَ ٱلْعَزِيزُ ٱلْحَكِيمُ ۝ لَهُۥ مُلْكُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ ۖ يُحْىِۦ وَيُمِيتُ ۖ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ۝ هُوَ ٱلْأَوَّلُ وَٱلْءَاخِرُ وَٱلظَّٰهِرُ وَٱلْبَاطِنُ ۖ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ۝ هُوَ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضَ فِى سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ ٱسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى ٱلْعَرْشِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنزِلُ مِنَ ٱلسَّمَآءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا ۖ وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنتُمْ ۚ وَٱللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ ۝ لَّهُۥ مُلْكُ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضِ ۚ وَإِلَى ٱللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ ٱلْأُمُورُ ۝ يُولِجُ ٱلَّيْلَ فِى ٱلنَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ ٱلنَّهَارَ فِى ٱلَّيْلِ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلِيمٌۢ بِذَاتِ ٱلصُّدُورِ ۝ ﴾

Whatever is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Allah, for He is the Almighty, All-Wise. To Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and causes death. And He is Most Capable of everything. He is the First and the Last, the Most High and Most Near, and He has ˹perfect˺ knowledge of all things. He is the One Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days, then established Himself on the Throne. He knows whatever goes into the earth and whatever comes out of it, and whatever descends from the sky and whatever ascends into it. And He is with you wherever you are. For Allah is All-Seeing of what you do. To Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. And to Allah all matters are returned. He merges the night into day and the day into night. And He knows best what is ˹hidden˺ in the heart. (Surah Al-Hadid 57:1-6)

It is clear from these verses that Allah ﷻ speaks of his ﷻ greatness. How his ﷻ presence is above all, and how he ﷻ created the heavens and the earth, and how perfect and periodic is his ﷻ creation.

The fourth verse is the main highlight out of the above six. It is also special as it dismantles the argument of two deviant theologies about where Allah ﷻ is. The first being the people who believe that Allah ﷻ is everywhere in the universe, and the second theology rejects the truth that Allah ﷻ is over his ﷻ throne.

The verse makes two statements. The first is that Allah ﷻ, the high, the exalted, is over his throne. The second is that he ﷻ is everywhere with the believers. It would be logical to note that Allah ﷻ isn't physically in both situations, i.e., one must be metaphorical, and as the Qur'an is perfect and doesn't contradict itself, both must be true. Now the question arises: which statement isn't talking about the physical presence of Allah ﷻ? The second statement that Allah ﷻ is with his believers is the metaphorical statement, as that would mean that Allah ﷻ is in dirty places if it were in the context of physical presence. Astaghfirullah! This would be crude blasphemy, as Allah ﷻ is the purest. To further substantiate, the statement that directly follows "And He is with you wherever you are" is "For Allah is All-Seeing of what you do." This means that Allah ﷻ being with us means that he ﷻ sees, listens, and knows where we are, what we do, and what lies in our hearts.

As for the statement "then established himself on the throne", we can see that what follows and precedes it both talk about the literal attributes and will of Allah ﷻ; thus, it is logical to note that the statement that Allah ﷻ is over his throne is literal.

If still the deviant groups, such as the Mu'tazila and Rafidah, may Allah ﷻ guide them, say that the throne means Allah ﷻ's absolute power and authority, in the context of this verse, their statement would be the

nastiest blasphemy. The verse says, “He is the One Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days, then established Himself on the Throne.” It says that Allah ﷻ created the heavens and the earth, then he ﷻ rose over his ﷻ throne. Does that mean that Allah ﷻ did not hold absolute power and authority before he ﷻ ascended to it? Astaghfirullah! May Allah ﷻ guide us all.

Although the statement that Allah ﷻ rose over his ﷻ throne is literal and holds, it has no implications except that Allah ﷻ didn’t physically move on the throne. Nor was the throne ever above Allah ﷻ, for he ﷻ is the Most High, the Most Exalted. As space, time, and direction are the creations of Allah ﷻ, and he ﷻ transcends their limitations, it can’t be that Allah ﷻ rose over in the sense of what we humans can comprehend. It is neither like climbing a ladder, nor flying upwards, nor any other imagination. It is obligatory upon us not to ponder and wonder about theological rhetoric, which transcends far above our limited intellect and bears no fruit except those that look like harmless berries. However, in reality, poison like the snake does with respect to the mental and spiritual state through spewing misguidance.

Moreover, let's try taking a situation. If Allah ﷻ were to ask us where he ﷻ is, wouldn’t we say that, “O Allah ﷻ! O Creator of the heavens and earth. O the one who revealed guidance through the Qur’an. Isn’t it Your ﷻ word that You ﷻ rose above the throne? O Allah ﷻ, You are above the heavens over the throne; however, it suits Your majesty and Your greatness!”

Does the affirmation of the statement “alā al-'arsyi istawā” in its literal form harm or negate the oneness of Allah ﷻ? Isn’t he ﷻ still Ar-Rahman, Ar-Raheem, As-Sami’, Al-Basir, Al-Aleem, Al-Aziz or Al-Qadir? Isn’t the negation of this statement the outright rejection of the word of Allah ﷻ?

We, as believers, must affirm that Allah ﷻ is over his throne in a way that suits his ﷻ might best and doesn't negate any of his ﷻ attributes, nor does it make him ﷻ contingent or dependent. The throne is one of the creations; it is one of the most magnificent creations, and it is above the Heavens, and Allah ﷻ is over it.

May Allah ﷻ guide us all; May Allah ﷻ forgive us for our sins; May Allah ﷻ unite us; May Allah ﷻ protect us from blasphemy and misguidance; May Allah ﷻ deal with the rebels; May Allah ﷻ purify our hearts and let us follow Islam like the Salaf رضي الله عنهم did, which was brought through the greatest man to ever walk on Earth, the Sayyid al-Mursalin, Rasulullah, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and the 124,000 Anbiya عليهم السلام before him ﷺ.

وَآخِرُ دَعْوَانَا أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

And our final prayer is that all praise belongs to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

And Allah ﷻ knows best.